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# Mobile Beat

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## THE SCHOOL MARKET

ENTERTAINING  
ALL AGES

BREAKING INTO THE MARKET

THE VARIETY OF YOUTH EVENTS

UPGRADING GEAR FOR BIG GIGS

MEETING THE MUSIC CHALLENGE

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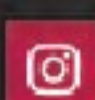
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## Why Should They Work for YOU?

By Jason Weldon



To a non-DJ, entertaining young people might seem like an easy thing to do. But when it comes to the kinds of services DJs provide, the school market can be just as challenging as the wedding or corporate arenas... and just as rewarding too, when done well.

In this issue, we offer some great ideas and advice for taking on this market niche, featuring contributions from acknowledged experts with many years of youth event experience, like Geoff Carlisle, Arnoldo Offermann and Rob Ferre.

We also bring back sales guru Jeffrey Gitomer's column, as we begin ramping up to his power-packed presentation at MBLV21, next March. Enjoy!

~ Dan Walsh, Editor-in-Chief

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# How to Break into Schools

IN OTHER WORDS, HOW TO REACH THE SCHOOL MARKET

By Geoff Carlisle

**S**o you may have thought about getting into the school dance market. Or you might have tried... but ran into a dead end making the connection? You may even question whether providing entertainment to schools is even worth the effort.

I'm here to say, YES it is!

I have a passion for providing entertainment for the school market because that's where I started over 33 years ago. I've had the opportunity to speak at several DJ expos about my experience including Mobile Beat.

Let look at five specific areas that will help you break into the market or pave the way toward business with schools.

**1. Determine what type of events the schools in your area have.** Are there dances around football games or holidays? Are there homecomings, back to school dainces, good behavior rewards, band banquets, proms, etc.?

Each school is different and may have many—or none—of the above mentioned events. The best way to find out is to do a little bit of investigative work. Look online (Google schools in your area) and/or see if your state has a directory of schools for the entire state. Keep in mind the list is typically organized by the school system for each school (city, county, etc.).

Determine how far you want to travel or create different zones of distance that will relate to your rate. Within 1 hour, \$xxxx, with in 1.5 hours, \$yyyy or within 2 hours, \$zzzz cost.

Once you have a target list try accessing each school's

website to see if they have a master calendar that lists the upcoming or last year's events. If not, you may have to go "old school" and call to ask!

Make the list as complete as possible.

**2. Email or call to get the contact of the person in charge of the events.** Most of the time each event is sponsored by a different organization but the master calendar is approved by an administrator.

My latest approach is to contact one of the sponsors of a specific event (ie, homecoming) and ask about what the school has done and who they have used in the past. This will give you a good idea about what you are going up against: another DJ competitor, a teacher or even a student DIYing it.

**3. Try to set up a meeting with that sponsor and ask if the others could join in too.** This sounds like a lot of effort but remember the sponsors don't know what they don't know! In



Geoff Carlisle has owned JAMM Entertainment Services, Inc in the Birmingham, Alabama area for over 33 years, doing over 400 events a year, including a wide array of entertainment services. He was a co-presenter of a school dance seminar at the first Mobile Beat DJ Show and Conference in 1997, and since then has spoken at several other Mobile Beat events.



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other words, Coach Billy with an iPod plugged into the gym PA system may be all the sponsor knows is available. Make a professional presentation: Be prepared to show some photos (or videos are even better) to the sponsors; show up dressed professionally; explain how you are the solution to their problem...and make sure to impress them!

**4. Show your expertise in the area of music.** Hit the hot button issues that they want to hear about or haven't thought of in the past. Explain what happens if someone or their school gets caught playing illegal music. Explain that you have edited versions of the music. Explain that you allow the students to submit a music list ahead of time...and also that the sponsor can pre-approve that list before the event. Explain your liability insurance and how that is a great thing. And lastly explain your professional approach to your business, no drinking, no smoking, etc. by you or your staff. All of these things add value to your service.

**5. Determine what their "pain points" are at the events.** Just like any prospective clients, they have from one to three things that make the events a pain!

It could be unedited music, the previous DJ was always late or was hard to get along with. Maybe they want more lights on in the gym / room, etc. Use these pain points to sell your services: Music—you got it covered. Show up at least an hour or hour-

and-a-half before the event. Give them your email and cell number and be quick to reply to any messages. Describe some of your lighting effects that can be used to illuminate the dark corners. Work with them as a team approach.

**6. Create packages that will fit within their budget.** Yes, sometimes there are schools that only have \$200 in the budget. You can determine if that is too low to send out a DJ. (Maybe it's a training opportunity?) But keep in mind that there are a lot of schools that have big budgets for specific events like homecoming, prom, end-of-school events, etc. You may be able to create a package deal to cover two or three smaller-budget dances to ensure you get the two or three big budget ones!

We have middle schools that hire us for three to five holiday oriented dances for \$450-\$600 dollars each. We also have school proms that range from \$3000 up to \$10,000. Schools are not always dead end or low budget clients.

And finally, don't forget that the kids you entertain at your school events are involved with other groups like churches, clubs and are headed off to college soon. Always treat youth events as opportunities to grow your future client base for all kinds of events! **MB**





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# DJ School Daze

SCHOOL EVENT POSSIBILITIES ARE SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

By Rob Ferre

**T**he new school year is quickly arriving and that means you have many opportunities to take advantage of events that come your way. For high schools, it's a shoe-in for homecoming or tailgate parties, but are you looking to do even more school events? I suggest looking into elementary schools. I have often advised DJs to start marketing and looking to PTAs, PTOs, or principals of schools to see what events they are hosting.

Here are a few of the different types of events schools are ramping up for in the fall:

**Fall Carnivals.** Sometimes these events go by different names—back-to-school night, fall carnival, family night—but they are all the same. These are great events at which to

where we come in.

For Fun Runs you can really put the fun into "fun run." You can play music as the kids run their laps and make announcements throughout the event. What can make you really popular with the PTA committee is be the guy that does the warm up routines with kids before they go out for their fun run.

For silent auctions you can play the part of MC. As the MC you make sure items are being sold and the winners are notified. Help create a good flow for the event and create value by being the DJ who can also MC.

**Assemblies.** There are a variety of assemblies you can do for elementary schools. You might want to pitch doing a kick-off assembly for the fund raisers, which are coordinated through the PTA.

Reward assemblies are basically a 30 to 40-minute dance party, and are a total blast

of an option that you can book through the principal. Sometimes they bring in a magician or an animal show. Why not bring in a DJ?!

A third type of assembly you can do is an educational assembly like Red Ribbon Assemblies. Educational assemblies require preparation, a message, and mastering your speaking skills.

**Bonus Tip:** How do you get in the front door? Create specific fliers that are geared towards school events. You can drop those off with the school's secretary or, if the principal is available, introduce yourself to him or her and talk to them about the services you provide. One secret that I'll share with you is that I find out when the



showcase your fun DJ skills, games, and interactive dances. Look to the principal or PTA to book this event.

**Back-to-School Night.** Schools often have orientation events in the evening for the parents of their students. They will go over school procedures, schedules and policy. Parents may bring their kids but they can't be in the meeting due the distraction of kids running around. So you provide them a solution such as a dance party in the gym or on the field while the orientation is going.

**Fund Raisers.** From Fun Runs to Silent Auction nights, I have DJ'd a variety of fund raisers for schools. As a DJ you can offer them a solution they didn't even know they needed. Often times these events are hosted by the PTA and they want to save money by trying to do it themselves; but many DIY events fall flat. That's

PTA has their meetings and I ask to be put on the agenda. I go to the meetings and I pitch my services only after networking and making sure I've "warmed up the crowd." If you bring a nice little treat they will love you even more. My best advice is telling them you are offering a solution to their problems. These PTA parents don't want to have to entertain all these kids and plan every detail all year long. You are the solution!

As you look forward to the fall, my hope is this article gives you more ideas for events that you can start booking today. If you are ever in need of advice, or want to share your ideas when it comes to kids events, join our Facebook forum at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/kidsdjforum/>. I hope to see you there, forum and have a great fall! **MB**



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# It's Not Censorship—It's Customer Service

SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF CONTENT FOR YOUTH EVENT ORGANIZERS

By Stu Chisholm

**T**he year was 2012. I was scheduled to play a Father-Daughter dance for a local Catholic Elementary school that I have worked for over the span of a decade or so. In the weeks leading up to the dance, I corresponded with the committee of parents who were overseeing the event, and I solicited requests for music their kids might enjoy along with some of the staples from years past. I also generated a list of current pop hits that I had radio edits for and were not otherwise lyrically offensive. Naturally, I had purged those tunes that were completely inappropriate for the K-6th Grade set, and the remaining selections were about as 'clean' as modern radio gets.

## YOU ARE THE PRO—TAKE CHARGE

I was surprised, then, by how many of those selections were nixed by the committee, yet when examining the lyrics a bit closer, had to agree in most cases. See, it's not just about the "seven dirty words", but about the subject matter; not only sexual overtones, but overt references to drinking, drugs, violence and so on. Since the dance would only run for three hours, with group games and activities taking up a lot of the time, it was easy to pare back the selections to a handful of approved, hot currents, with "evergreen" staples balancing out the rest.

If you have done such events, you know that they're just as much for the parents as they are for the kids! So when I got their request list, I wasn't surprised to find a few "classic" and more adult leaning tunes included. Knowing, too, that parents aren't perfect, I also went over their list. As it turned out, I had to cut a couple of their songs. When asked why I rejected Lady Gaga's "Born This





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*Stu Chisholm had been collecting music since he was about age 8 and began his DJ career in 1979. After a stint at the Specs Howard School of Broadcast Arts, he studied the DJ arts with famous Michigan broadcaster Bill Henning, interned at Detroit's rock powerhouse, WRIF, and later added voiceover work and club gigs at Detroit's best venues. He has shared his extensive DJ experience through MB columns, as a seminar speaker and through his book, *The Complete Disc Jockey: A Comprehensive Manual for the Professional DJ*.*

Way", which is a very positive, empowering song, I pointed out where she sings, "No matter gay, straight, or bi, Lesbian, transgendered life, I'm on the right track baby, I was born to survive". Regardless of my own feelings on the subject matter, when confronted with these lyrics, said parent agreed that we didn't need that particular song. Rather than disappoint, with Lady Gaga being at the height of her popularity, I instead created a song-length megamix, with all offensive lyrics bypassed.

### THERE'S OVERT, AND THEN THERE'S INERT...

During that same party, one of the dads brought up his daughter and asked for a new song by Flo Rida called "The Whistle Song". Not being familiar with it, and badly wanting currents for my super-young crowd, I previewed the song all the way through in my headphones: no bad words or concepts, no problem! When I played it, all of the kids erupted in whistles and the parents beamed. It was one of the highlights of that dance. My work had paid off and everyone was happy.

The next day, a Sunday morning, I had to play tunes for a local Softball league awards picnic. Once again I had kids, mostly K-6th, as well as parents and siblings. Having researched the Catholic school dance so heavily, I kept the playlist handy, poaching tunes off of it liberally. Parents and organizers were pleased, even signing me up for the following year before I left. Yet one parent was not happy...

"Do you know what that song is about", the incredulous parent asked? Having only heard it twice before, I said, "I didn't think it was about anything". "Oh, no," the parent gasped, "It's about... oral sex"! Hmmm... I considered the possibility that he was right, and answered as many of you might have: "That might be true, but do you think these kids picked up on that? Didn't you see how happy they were, whistling along? I avoid overt content of any inappropriate kind, but if we eliminate all double-entendre, I'd have almost nothing to play". That parent agreed, and I think it was the right answer.

### SAIL ON, SILVER GIRL

Shenanigans like this has been going on since the dawn of Rock & Roll. Peter, Paul & Mary once sang, "But if I really say it, the radio won't play it, unless I lay it between the lines" in their song, "I Dig Rock & Roll Music". The point being that adults can say adult things if they do so in a manner that kids and other disinterested adults can easily ignore or even miss entirely. This is the opposite of "overt", and gives both parents and stressed DJs some latitude. Of course, people also bring their own bag of neuroses to the listening party! Back in the '70s, I was once told that "Bridge Over Troubled Water" was "a drug song"! My then classmate pointed to the lyric, "Sail on silver girl [it refers to a needle, like a syringe!] Sail on by. Your time has come to shine, all your dreams are on their way [it will make you trip!]". Could he have been right? Sure. He also could've been seeing what he wanted, or expected to see. Art of all kinds have a tendency to invite people to do just that.

The question, then, becomes, "does it matter"? My answer: yes, if it's the general consensus. If it isn't, and there is no controversy among the general public, then rock it hard! In ALL cases, take the time to audition your playlist ahead of time and take charge when needed, because ultimately if the wrong content drops from your speakers, nobody is going to be pointing at the person who requested it, or the parent who thoughtlessly jotted it on your list. They'll be looking squarely at you.

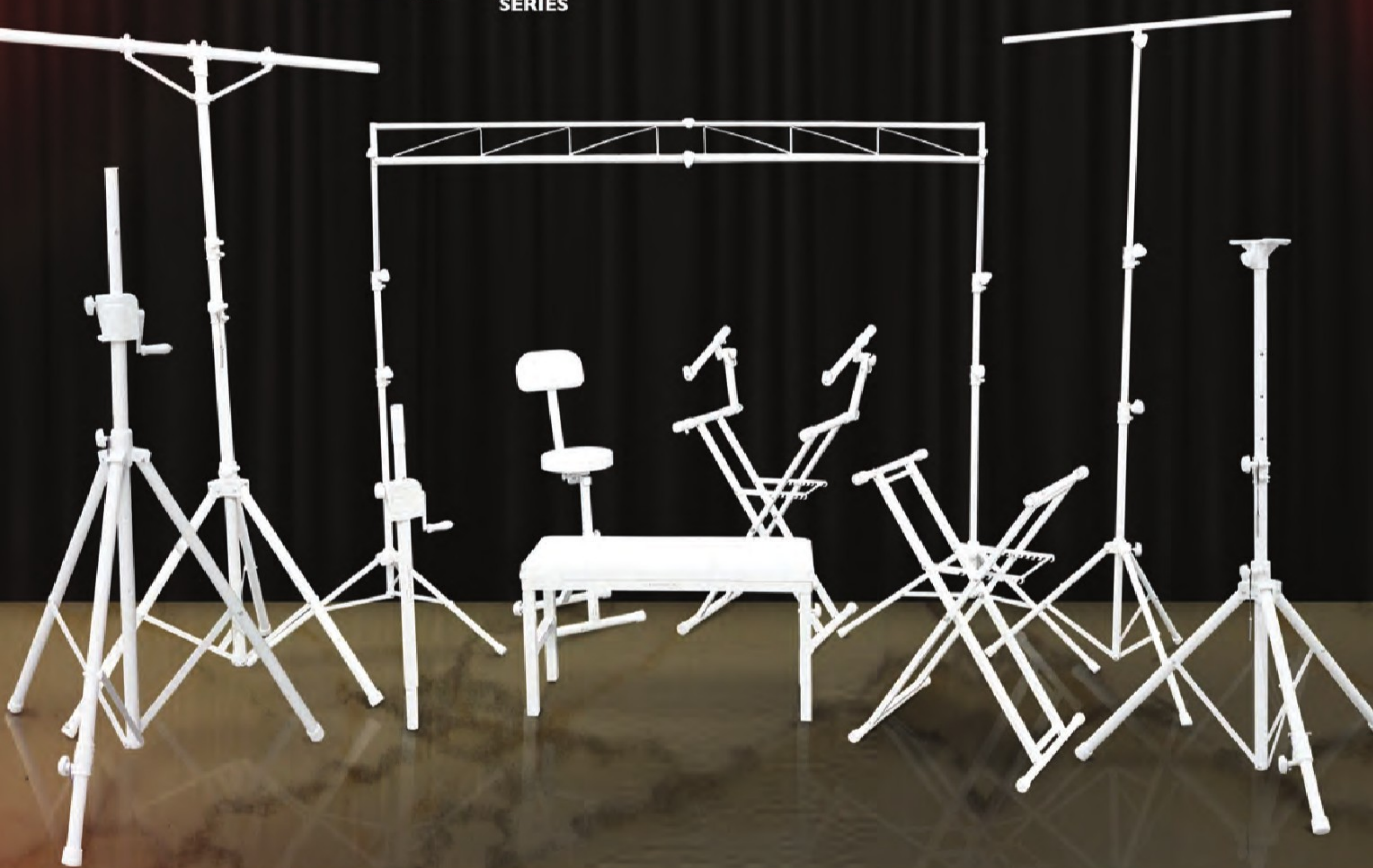
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# Proposals Properly Applied

THE PROPOSAL AND THE SALE ARE MILES APART

By Jeffrey Gitomer

**“Sounds good, send me a proposal.” How many times have you heard that? Too many. So you run back to your office, put together a proposal, send it to the prospect, and start the follow-up process (and the prayer vigil).**

Or do you?

REALITY: The sale should be solidified BEFORE the proposal is written. Your proposal should be the essence of what has been decided by you and your prospect. It should solidify the sale.

How many proposals do you win — how many did you lose? If you lose way more proposals than you win, it's much more than just the proposal. It's the proposal process.

Count the wins. Count the losses. That's the scorecard baby. Your scorecard. Ouch.

AND when you win proposals, how profitable are they? Are you telling your boss, “Hey let's go in real low on this one so we can get the business, and then six months from now, boy we can really lose some money.” Ouch.

REALITY: Once you lower the price, customers expect a low price all the time.

Proposals are there because buyers think they'll get the lowest price or the best deal by pitting one company against the other. Your job is to make yourself a winner BEFORE the proposal happens by creating conditions or terms that preclude others from either bidding or winning.

The first thing you need to do is determine if it's a price proposal or a value proposal. If they're going to take the lowest price only, you're going to lose, even if you win. Because the lowest price is the lowest profit. It may even be no profit.

So the challenge is, can you create a profitability formula or a productivity formula, measured against what you do, that sets a standard for the proposal. A formula that your competition must meet or exceed regardless of initial price.

You need to convince your buyer that there's a long term cost, not simply a short term price.

Are they are buying your price only

— taking the lowest bid? If so, they only need a one sentence proposal, and you don't need me.

Try this: — Don't do it... at first. When someone asks me for a proposal the first thing I say to them is no. That always shocks people. And besides, proposals are a pain in the butt.

I ask the person if they were taking notes. They say, “Yes.” I say, “Well, let me

**The sale should  
be solidified  
BEFORE  
the proposal is  
written.**

just sign the notes.” I continue by saying all we really need to do is pick a date to begin. And 30% of the time the prospect will say, “You're right.”

The other 70% of the time the prospect will insist on a proposal. But I've just won 30% of the business without submitting a paper. And there's a reason for this. I have sales balls and you may not.

The reason proposals are there is to lower risk to the buyer, and potentially to lower the cost. But in the final analysis many proposals can be eliminated if your prospect feels that your price is fair, and that their risk is low.

If the risk is low and the reward is high then the answer is always obvious.

Before the decision is made, it's important to your customer that they know what your product or service will be like AFTER it's been delivered. This will take away all risks and all fear. And it may also take away the price-only-decision process.

The key words are: value messages on video testimonials.

Customers only buy for an hour or two, but they may use for years. So you say to your customer, “Mr. Jones, I'd like to add a clause to the proposal that insists on proof of salespeople's claims. And so I am

asking you to require five testimonials in video form so that you'll know any claim a salesperson makes has been validated by a customer, and it's not just a sales pitch or a proposal.”

The video testimonial is a powerful piece of support. And depending upon the quality can be the difference between sale and no sale.

2.5 thoughts on testimonials:

1. Testimonials reduce the risk of purchase.

2. Testimonials are the only proof you've got.

2.5 Testimonials MUST be included in every proposal.

Winning proposals are solidified by dynamic sales presentations. Proposals should be the solidifying factor, not the sales pitch. The proposal should document what has been said and agreed. The proposal should confirm the sale and all the claims you made about it. Does yours?

Your proposal process is not a regurgitation of your price list. It is not a document to see how much of your profit you can give away. It is not something you prepare to beat the competition.

Your proposal is the gateway earned business. It solidifies a value-driven sales presentation that begins or extends a relationship where everyone profits. The minute you low ball a price, you've gone from a relationship sale to transactional sale and the next person who low balls your price will beat you. And beat themselves.

Don't just win the proposal...Win the value. Win the profit. And win the relationship. **MB**

*Jeffrey Gitomer is the author of twelve best-selling books including The Sales Bible, The Little Red Book of Selling, and The Little Gold Book of Yes! Attitude. His real-world ideas and content are also available as online courses at [www.GitomerLearningAcademy.com](http://www.GitomerLearningAcademy.com). For information about training and seminars visit [www.Gitomer.com](http://www.Gitomer.com) or [www.GitomerCertifiedAdvisors.com](http://www.GitomerCertifiedAdvisors.com), or email Jeffrey personally at [salesman@gitomer.com](mailto:salesman@gitomer.com).*

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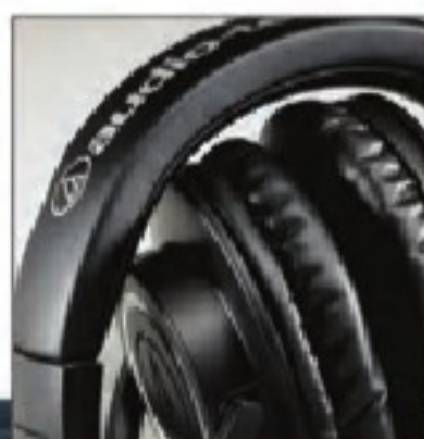
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# Kicking Your School Gigs into High Gear

**YOUR BEST SHOW IS ONLY POSSIBLE WITH THE BEST GEAR**

By Arnoldo Offermann

**O**k, I lied. July's article promised another multi-part series, but we're going to hit pause on that to talk about a very important part of your business. This may very well be the MOST important part of DJ service: your gear. Wait—what? I thought talent was the important thing for a successful business. Well, if that's 100% true, why does Aerosmith need a multi-million dollar lighting rig to complement their rockin' selves?

I mean it's Aerosmith for crying out loud. If they wanted to perform at my house They don't need all that stuff. BUT...the brand Aerosmith, the performance and show need it.

Get it? It's a show. Are you a show or just a service? This can be argued on weddings (I personally bring a show, even with no lighting, it's a show); but for school dances, it can't be argued. Plain and simple, you cannot present to a school dance committee and tell them: "No lights, just enough sound...and me! But I'm really talented."

That's not going to sell your company. I don't care how good you are. You can argue it with me all you want, but when it comes to school dances—Ahhh, what do I know? ;-). That being said, let's talk the three basics of gear:

## SOUND

Good sound is important, but I think it's the number one thing I see school dance companies mess up. They either bring too much or not enough. Can there be such a thing as too much sound? Yes! If you're going way overkill, you're not getting the proper ROI. I've seen companies bring out an insane line array for 600 people. Likewise, two small speakers won't cut it for 2000 students, either.

I prefer to use point-source speakers (aka, traditional speakers), and with proper rigging hardware and practices, I fly them as often as I can. This lets me get the speakers further from the crowd (resulting in a wider sound field) and point the sound directly at the dance floor. You can't ask for a better scenario than that. For this, I use my Global Truss crank stands to take my truss 16' into the air. And when running multiple systems, simplicity



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is key! I run powered speakers with built-in protection. My two weapons of choice are the Yamaha DSR115 and the EV ETX15Ps. If you're on a budget, this is NOT the place to skimp, though both companies offer step down versions that's still pack a potent punch.

## LIGHTING

Lighting is the visual aspect of your show. It is literally what will sell you. Talk all you want during your sales pitch, but if there isn't a kickass light show to show them during your sales pitch, then it's just talk!

You need four things for an effective light show:

**Floods.** No floods = house lights on, or it'll be too dark. I sell many schools on the fact that my light shows are bright BUT still enjoyable by the dance crowd. This is a big plus for admin. My choice has been hex LED pars (like the ADJ Hex Par series) because I get RGB plus Amber, white and UV. This is crucial for the last part (as you'll see shortly).

**Complementaries.** This is what I call lights that work in sets, such as scanners or moving heads. This is a good portion of the animated part of your show. Moving heads today offer a lot of features for a good price, but you can often get a scanner for half the price. With this in mind, the most important part is to choose a light that works with or without haze, depending on what you can or cannot do. Moving heads come in many flavors, but are classified as spot (perfect for GOBO projection), wash, and beam (needs particles in the air). I prefer a moving head that's a hybrid and has the optics to do both (or even all three) but you can also get some great movers that provide a spot and focus it to blur to a wash or a tighter beam. (Think something like the ADJ Focus

Spot Three Z.)

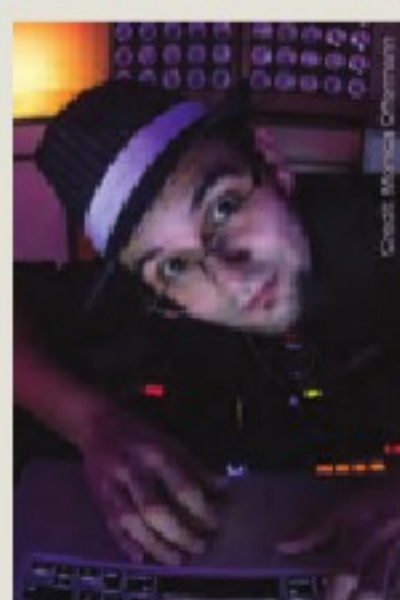
**Centerpiece.** This is the BANG of your show! When the bass drops and people go crazy, this is the light that takes your show to the next step. I use the ADJ Warlock as it gives me high energy effects or creates a slow disco ball type feel. Then again, you could just do a disco ball and aim your movers at it. Perhaps a high-powered laser would be your ticket?

**Effects.** These are moonflowers, black lights, strobes, or any specialty light. Using the hex pars wisely, you can use the floods for strobe and UV effects.

**Control.** You wouldn't use iTunes to DJ, right? So why let your lights go on standalone mode? This is just silly. DMX control is a must. This is NOT an option! If you're a single op, you would kill it with the ADJ Airstream Bridge DMX or (my recommendation) is to get a lighting tech and use software such as Elation's CompuShow. The important key here is to BUSK, or run the show live. Sure, you can preprogram for each song, but you'll be wasting a LOT of time. Time is money, so you'll lose more money than if you just hired a tech to work with you.

A good tech will work as hard as the DJ, if not harder. Between controlling all the lights, following the DJ, and making the show fresh, he or she will be super busy! Either way, you need to make sure your show will pop!

The most important part is to make sure you're at the top of your school dance game, not only in terms of performance but more, importantly gear. I heavily recommend (shameless plug) the educational series Master School Dances (MasterSchoolDances.com) to take you to that next level. Now grab that gear and make the best production you can! **MB**



Arnoldo Offermann is president of 4SchoolsOnly, a school dance powerhouse in Florida, and the authority in making profit with school dances. His video series, **Master School Dances**, has helped hundreds of DJs become their market leaders no matter what the economy looks like. Arnoldo is also an industry educator offering many seminars and webinars on various topics, such as marketing, lighting design, video mapping, DMX software, and general tips and tricks. You can check out his YouTube channel at [YouTube.com/DJCraziAce](https://www.youtube.com/DJCraziAce) and Master School Dances at [MasterSchoolDances.com](http://MasterSchoolDances.com).



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# Opening and Closing a Dance Floor

By Staci Nichols

**I**n a nightclub, when the first DJ opens, the club is generally empty (and, even if it isn't, the early birds are rarely dancing). When most people enter the club, they'll be jumping in mid-set. For that matter, they'll be leaving mid-set as well. On the radio, of course, music plays continuously and the DJ isn't concerned with getting people to dance. Therefore, the art and science of opening and closing a dance floor is really a concern unique to us as mobile DJs.

## OPENING A DANCE FLOOR

I'm not going to claim to be an expert, so all I can really share are my own strategies. I'd imagine each and every one of us have our own system for opening a dance floor. I can say that I use every tool in my box, as far as pre-dancing crowd reading is concerned, to determine my opening strategy (the playlist, crowd demograph-

ics and behavior, time of day, day of the week, level of darkness in the venue, amount of alcohol flowing, etc.)

My go-to opener is to start with is Macklemore's "Can't Hold Us" (The song's not too old or too new, has remained super popular yet not overdone, and the lyrics are a great match: "This is the moment / Tonight is the night / We'll fight 'til it's over / So we put our hands up / Like the ceiling can't hold us.") "Can't Hold Us" is 146 BPM—just like Billy Idol's "White Wedding," so at the mostly instrumental bridge towards the end of "Can't Hold Us," I'll play a bit of the "White Wedding" chorus so both songs are audible.

From there I go to the trusty "Billie Jean" (118 BPM). I loop the instrumental part at the beginning and drop in a loop of the "Celebration" (120 BPM) chorus. It keeps that "get the party started" mood going (without the staleness of playing the entire "Celebration" song) and reminds guests why they should be dancing! From "Billie Jean," I move to "Uptown Funk" (115 BPM). Even if I'm doing a country wedding (one of my niches), I'll usually use this opener as I've found it more effective than "Sweet Home Alabama" or some Luke Bryan song.

Variation #1: If I have an older crowd and, say, a couple that didn't give me any playlist whatsoever (so I know they aren't picky and don't have a problem with some

crowd (my other niche) where I'll be playing both English and Spanish music per the client's instructions, then I may swap out "Uptown Funk" for "Suavemente" by Elvis Crespo (124 BPM)—especially if I can see that the first two songs brought too few Spanish-speakers to the dance floor.

## CLOSING A DANCE FLOOR

Closing a dance floor is a lot easier than opening it because we've now had several hours to observe what the crowd likes. I always used to end with a slow dance, but within the last two years I switched to a sing-along as I liked the way it brought the crowd together better. I almost always close with "Don't Stop Believin'" by Journey (120 BPM). Generally the only time I'll switch it up is if the couple requested something else. In that case, I almost always play "Don't Stop Believin'" as the second to the last song.

If it's a country crowd, I will end with a block of sing-alongs (people rarely dance to country—even if it's their favorite genre...but they will sing-along). I'll go from Toby Keith's "Red Solo Cup" (82 BPM) to Garth Brooks' "Friends in Low Places" (108 BPM) to "Don't Stop Believin'." If the crowd is really into the drunken country sing-along thing, I may add Toby Keith's "Courtesy of the Red, White, and Blue" for back-to-back Toby songs.

Listen to my go-to wedding dance floor opener here:

<https://www.mixcloud.com/staci-nichols/wedding-dance-floor-opener-mix-dj-staci-revolution-weddings-san-diego/>

of the "overdone" songs), I may swap out "Celebration" for "Can't Hold Us" and play "Billie Jean" without the loop.

Variation #2: If I have a mostly black crowd with a heavy amount of older people (and the bride/groom has indicated that they like '60s and '70s old school), I'll swap out "Can't Hold Us" for Earth Wind & Fire's "Let's Groove Tonight" (125 BPM).

Variation #3: If it's a Spanish/English bilingual

To close a bilingual dance floor, my fellow white folks are typically dwindling in numbers while the Hispanic crowd is going strong...so majority rules. The closer of chose is then Los Tigres del Norte's "La Puerta Negra," a Spanish sing-along that always induces a few howls at the moon and shouts of "Aye, aye, aye."

When I lived in Puerto Vallarta and did mostly American and Canadian destination weddings on the beach, I liked to close with Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," which captured the happy, tropical mood and almost always led to the couple in the middle of a circle of guests followed by a group hug! **MB**



*DJ Staci Nichols is based in San Diego. She specializes in spinning "country fusion," Latin/Spanish, and mainstream music. Her wedding know-how has appeared in San Diego Style Weddings, Offbeat Bride, Wedding Planner Magazine, Gig Masters, Brides Without Borders, Book More Brides, and more. SanDiegoDJStaci.com. Instagram/Facebook/Pinterest/Twitter: SanDiegoDJStaci*



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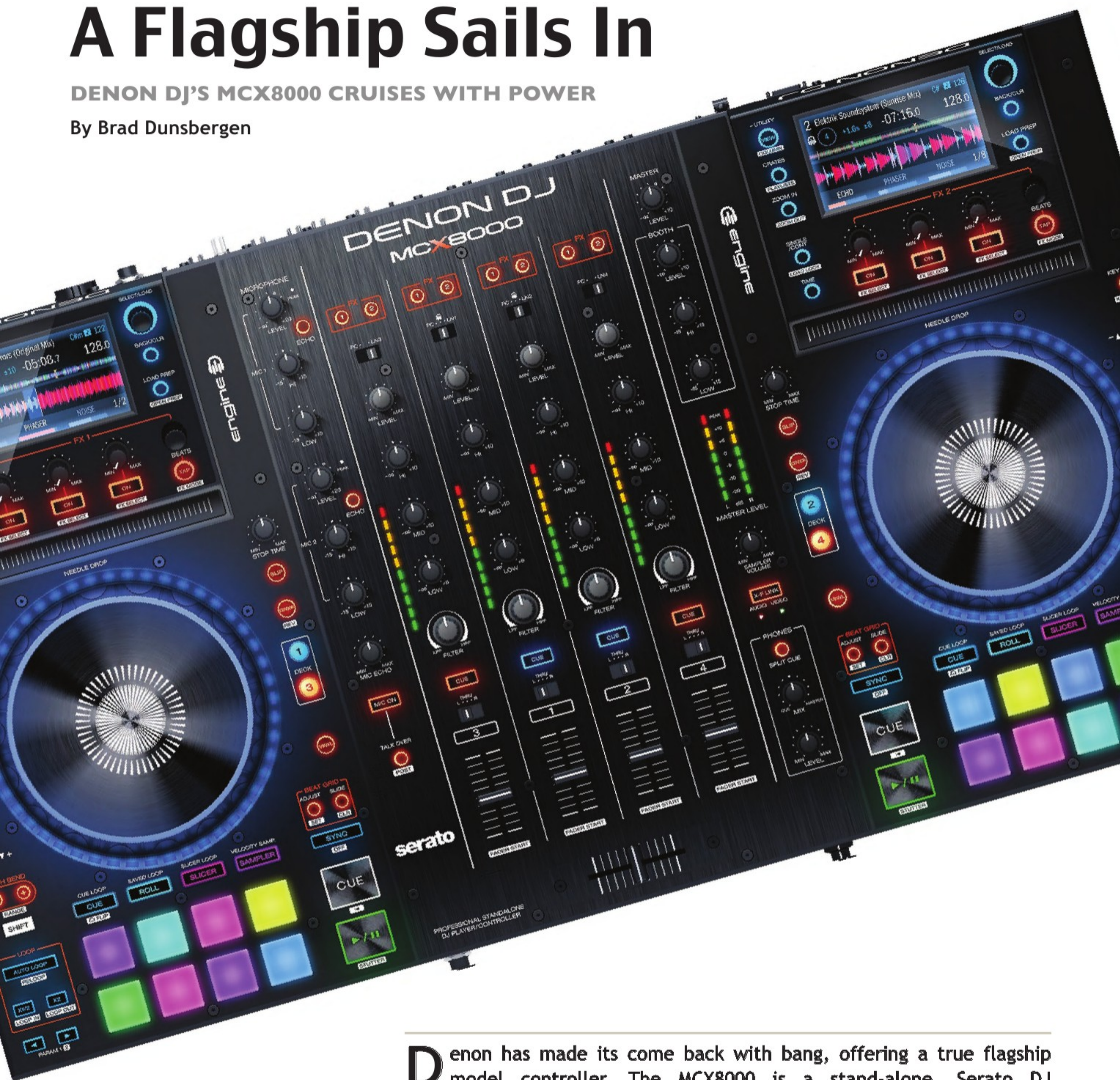
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# A Flagship Sails In

DENON DJ'S MCX8000 CRUISES WITH POWER

By Brad Dunsbergen



**D**enon has made its come back with bang, offering a true flagship model controller. The MCX8000 is a stand-alone, Serato DJ controller. Yeah that sounds a little confusing. Is it one or the other? Well it's actually both—the MCX8000 really is a two-headed monster.

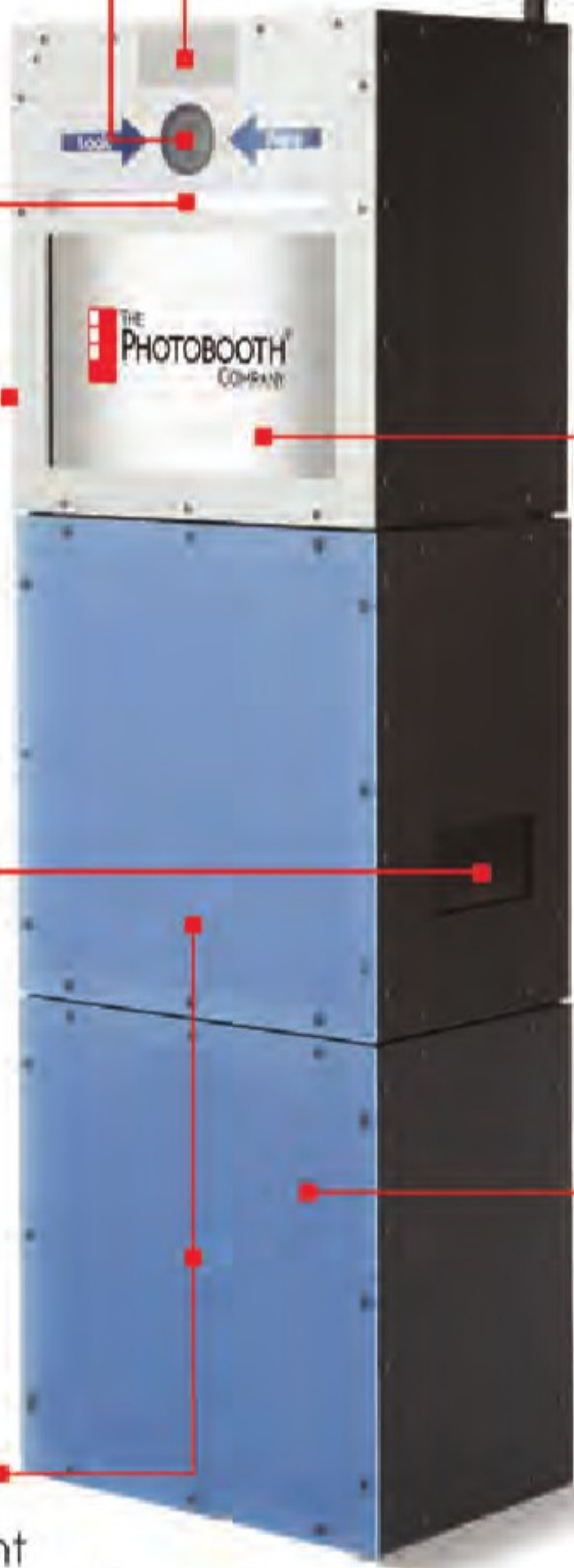
It offers a true stand-alone experience using Denon's Engine software, it can be used with a computer using the latest version of Serato DJ, or it can be used in combination with both. It features a fully loaded four-channel digital mixer that also has analog line inputs on each channel. It features solid metal construction and this unit is big—I mean really big—with dimensions of 17" x 28.7" x 2.8" and a weight of 18.4 pounds.

The MCX8000 features two mirrored decks that can be selected between channels 1 and 3 and 2 and 4. Up top on each deck is a high definition display that will allow you to





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it has been purchased. Pitch N Time is time-stretching and key-shifting algorithm that allows for massive time stretches to tracks with little noticeable degradation in sound. Pitch Play allows you to play your cues across a range of different keys. It really allows you to get creative with your mixes. To see this feature in action, search YouTube for "MCX8000 Pitch Play."

Engine software has gone through a couple of refinements in the time that I have had the MCX8000.

With each revision it has gotten much better and more stable. It really couldn't be easier to get a drive set up for use with the MCX8000 using the Engine software. Take your entire existing library of MP3, AAC, AIFF or WAV files and drop it into Engine. Engine will automatically analyze all the files. Analysis of the files is lightning fast but depending on the size of the library it still may take some time. After the files have been analyzed, cue points can be set. One of the really cool features in Engine is if you have set your hot cues in Serato DJ they will automatically transfer to Engine. Engine will also read your iTunes library, so all of your playlists that have been made there, including smart playlists, will automatically show up. Once all your music has been prepared it is time to transfer some of your tunes to a flash drive or portable hard drive. To do this simply drag the songs or playlists over to the drive icon and Engine will prepare the drive for you. That is it. It really is that easy to get up and going with engine.

Sound quality from the MCX8000 is truly unrivaled with its 24 bit digital to analog converters. Both main and booth outputs feature high-quality XLR ports.

Denon's MCX8000 truly has been a pleasure to use and I would highly recommend it to anyone looking to up their game with a quality piece of digital equipment with built-in backup. The

MCX8000 is simply what a flagship offering should be. It has all the bells and whistles that are expected but is missing one item that is usually true with a flagship model, the high price. With a street price around \$1,299 this is one high-end piece of equipment that could make its way into any mobile DJ's rig. **MB**

[www.denondj.com/mcx8000](http://www.denondj.com/mcx8000)







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# Upgrading Your Biggest Add-On

THE SKYBOX EXA FROM BLIZZARD LIGHTING TAKES IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

By Jake Feldman



**I**n talking to customers, I've noticed that uplighting—once a fringe request for weddings and other formal affairs—has reached full saturation and is on the top of brides' minds when it comes to decorating a dream reception space. After years of hard work to make uplighting officially a "thing" in our market, I imagined we were finally going to have an easier time selling it.

Well, I was wrong about that. What should be a high-profit upsell has quickly morphed into a freebie "thrown in" by some DJs who do not have the skills and technology to make it a truly added value (let alone the foresight to realize how profitable uplighting can be).

So, how do you differentiate yourself from your "I'll throw in the uplights for free" competition and charge for something that many clients now expect to be included as a deal-sweetener? You have to look for and purchase the best equipment available, and also invest the time in making sure that you and your staff know how to use it properly. Then, you have to convince clients of the quality of your work when utilizing the equipment. That's where my latest acquisition of uplighting comes in.

## THE SEARCH

Of course I did know that in order to have the best lighting in my market, I needed to not only look at what others were using, but to also look at the national market and see where the trends were heading. I knew we needed rugged fixtures (more on that

later) and the ability to charge the units inside of rolling cases. I also knew we needed white for the most formal of events to blend into the backgrounds, as I have a personal distaste for lighting "shields." Finally, I needed the ability to control the units from

one central location easily (our staff has a phobia of new technology) with the option of changing colors if the shade selected wasn't right in the client's eyes.

## THE FIND

After narrowing down my search to two options, I ultimately selected the SkyBox EXA from Blizzard Lighting with built-in SkyWire wireless control. Theoretically, I could have chosen a couple of the options from those two companies that were in my final two and been in great shape. In reality, the choice for me came down to three main components: function, construction, and price.

## FUNCTION

The SkyBox EXA is a battery-powered fixture that is fueled by onboard rechargeable lithium-ion batteries that can last for an average of 10 hours. Seven 15-watt 6-in-1 LEDs are powered by those batteries, making the SkyBox EXA one of the brightest (at full on) LED uplights marketed to DJs. Additionally, not only is the fixture RGBW (red-green-blue-white), but there are also Amber and UV color palettes onboard (making the last 2 of the 6-in-1 LEDs).

Perhaps the single greatest selling point for me in the function realm of these fixtures was the set of capabilities enabled by the SkyWire wireless control system. As each of the fixtures have an antenna attached on the side that acts as a receiver, while the transmitter is a six-channel LED controller known as the Kontrol 5. At the beginning of the event, the DJ simply turns on the SkyBoxes and places them in the desired location throughout the room. From there, the rest is handled by the Kontrol 5, which includes dimming, color mixing, strobing, and scene programming capabilities.

## CONSTRUCTION

My main push to acquire new uplighting was brought on by my previous set of lights. They were plastic, had separate LEDs for each color, and really were a awesome purchase at the time (five years ago). Since then, however, they—like most gear—have gotten used and abused, not purposefully, but by haste and carelessness, something that is a curse wrapped in the blessing of a busy schedule. Those lights were tossed around and some were cracked





and broken, all from being in heavy use for a period of years.

So when I was searching for the perfect uplight, I knew I needed a sturdier base to start with. SkyBox EXAs are metal (not plastic) and carry a weight of 7.27 lbs each (which also means that children at events are not likely to pick them up and toss them, as had happened with the previous lightweight lights) and for rigged setups, the solid mounting bracket is less likely to bend or break off from the frame of the light.

Next, it was important (both in terms of time and space) that the fixtures be able to be charged in their cases. To fit that need, I ordered the companion SkyBox 8 cases that are stackable and support onboard charging. These cases are ATA-style and include casters which make transporting the lights convenient.

## PRICE

Perhaps the single biggest question we get as DJs is “what is this going to cost?” Naturally, when DJs themselves buy things, price is usually a factor—and this purchase was no exception. The SkyBox EXAs retail individually at around \$499 (with a list of \$699), however with uplighting in mind Blizzard actively works with their dealers to offer package pricing, which include the lights, cases, and controller for a tremendous value. I ended up purchasing 20 lights with cases and a controller.

Why, you might ask, would I make this significant investment in this equipment that others in my market are foolishly giving away for free? It’s because “they” don’t have these fixtures and haven’t made that investment. Clients will see the difference

in quality of equipment and service not only at their event, but also when we take the time to sell them on the difference in our comfortable office space, where they can touch the lights if they want to and (in real time) pick out the uplighting color(s) for their event. (That, of course, is hard to do in a Starbucks.)

## THE RESULT

I may seem a little nerdy when I say I was incredibly excited for these lights to come. The whole set arrived one month ago and has gone out on six events so far. So, a significant chunk of my investment has already been re-paid and the reaction from our clients has been fantastic. The fixtures are sharp looking and elegant—and they are easy to use for my guys. Venue managers have also marveled at them (some of them offer their own uplighting packages) because of how easy they are to set up—they just work!

While packages may differ in areas and among companies, we offer 18 uplights with our full-room packages (4 per non-key wall, 6 on the key-wall). Pricing wise, we sell this package as a \$350 add-on, which equates to 10 minutes worth of work and an extra \$50 in the pocket of the DJ who performs the event. Profit-wise, uplighting can be very lucrative for those who know how to sell it. For us, \$300 profit for 10 minutes worth of work (and a happier DJ) is a win-win. With the SkyBox EXA that just got easier, and I couldn’t be happier that I made the investment. **MB**

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### EYE CANDY

# Turning the Key on Quality Uplighting

MOBILEPAR HEX 4 FROM COLORKEY  
CREATIVE LIGHTING

By Jerry Beck

I'd like to shed some LIGHT on this cool new fixture called the MobilePar Hex 4 made by ColorKey Creative Lighting. It's the next generation of battery-powered, wireless DMX LED PAR lighting.

The MobilePar HEX 4 is a compact fixture. The chassis comes in white and black with four impressively vibrant 12-watt RGBAW+UV LEDs—that's red, green, blue, amber, white, and ultraviolet under each lens. The other palette of colors that this fixture can easily produce are clean ambers, yellows, whites, deep purples—even pastels are possible. The angle on the beam is 30°, which offers a nice wash where the beam sticks to the wall and is seen on the ceiling. These colors are rich and vibrant with UV being the newest color on the palette. In fact, I decided to do an unofficial, less than scientific "test" which was a fade into the UV light to see if lint would show up on black cloth. My unofficial approach to testing the quality of the UV light's intensity resulted in me giving it "two thumbs up!"

*MobilePar Hex 4 (White) by ColorKey Creative Lighting*





At the base of the MobilePar HEX 4 is a built-in, adjustable kickstand that allows the light to be positioned and angled effortlessly in any setting. The adjustable kickstand bracket has a hole at the bottom so that an 'O' clamp can be used to place the fixtures on trussing.

Uplighting would be the more common use of this fixture for mobile DJs, however, the fixture can be used in many different applications, such as color washes, spotlighting, and aesthetic lighting, along with other creative applications. The MobilePar HEX 4 has onboard programs that offer standalone, master/slave, auto, and sound active modes, as well as dimmer, strobe, and gradual change effects. These changes can be made with an infrared remote control with a 30-foot reach, but if you want to step up your game even more, then you should also purchase the MobileCon 192 universal WI-DMX wireless DMX-512 controller which is proprietary to these fixtures. It's a great controller when using multiple fixtures, because it has beat activation, tap sync, and auto run. It makes it more streamlined for you to have complete control over these fixtures without any wiring.

You have to love battery powered uplights. The MobilePar HEX 4 has a 5200 MAH, 14.-V battery on board. It allows for better aesthetics, and setup is as easy as turning the fixture on and putting it in the desired place. In addition, you can easily put these fixtures in areas that would otherwise be inaccessible or have no power outlets nearby. This fixture only weighs 6.8 lbs., with a small handle at the top, which allows for easy carry.

The MobilePar HEX 4 may be more expensive to purchase than traditional, AC-powered uplights, but if you are serious about your uplighting, about getting a nice return on your investment, AND saving a significant amount of time on labor, wiring, and gaff tape, then spending a few extra dollars is well worth it.

At a recent wedding I used these lights, starting with a full charge on the battery, and seven hours later they were still going strong. During my aforementioned test I was constantly changing the fade and utilizing the programs, which included UV and white along with all of the other colors at various times throughout the evening. Simply put, these lights are phenomenal.



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Uplighting is getting better and better, and the MobilePar HEX 4 from ColorKey provides a great option when you go to expand your uplighting arsenal. **MB**

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# Why Should They Work for YOU?

ATTRACTING TRUE TALENT IS KEY TO MULTI-SYSTEM SUCCESS

By Jason Weldon



**I** am always preaching about coming up with solid reasons why customers should book you. But I rarely touch on reasons why people should work for you. Think about that for a minute. What is your USP to get people to want to work for you—either as a DJ, in the office, as a technician? What are the things that you do that will make them choose to work for you over someone else?

Evaluating the current talent pool should be a daily task that all business owners are constantly doing. We all know we want to hire great talent, no matter where they might fit in in our business. I mean, you're probably telling your customers that you have great customer service and that your DJs are the best in the business, right? So if you are telling them that, don't you need to be able to actually get the best of the best?

In order to get this great talent (and retain it), you have to think differently and offer them the best of the best in perks or incentives or packages. Certain things that will stack the deck in your favor ever so slightly or maybe even a hands down, no-brainer for them to be on your team.

From a DJ/technician point of view, it all starts with financial compensation. You have to pay them what they are worth. As a company, you want to get what you worth, so you need to pay the people that are working for you what they are worth. If your events are priced correctly, this should not be a problem at all.

If you have a good financial compensation package, your employee's tenure will grow and grow. You also want to look at how you can make the level of their responsibilities easier. That's right, more money, less work. If you can promote to new hires that you have a "great management team that takes the burden off of their shoulders so they can just DJ," you would be inclined to get better candidates that want to work for you.

From an inside sales/operations point of view, it is usually weighted to more of a work/life balance, followed very closely by financial compensation, at least from my perspective. An autonomous workplace is key for most people in this industry. Good talent doesn't want or need a lot of micro-managing. Let them work! Clearly defined structures describing what they are and are not supposed to be doing helps attract good people. Flexible

work hours, health care options, vacation time and so on are all things you need to think about when hiring new talent.

At Synergetic, we do a few little things that you may certainly use for your team. Anything that has helped my company grow, I'm happy to share—I would love to help yours grow too! Our salaried employees all get unlimited vacation time. All employees get their birthday off if they choose to take it. They all have laptops, so if the need warrants, they could work from home and still be connected to the office. We have a very good health insurance plan that they like. But most of all, I am not on their cases every day. I want to hire really good people and then let them work within the guidelines I have created. Trust me when I say, it works.

So, what do you have in place to attract the best people to come work for you? **MB**

*Jason Weldon is a wedding business consultant who specializes in small to medium-sized companies that want to grow their business. His objective is to help guide people through organizing their thoughts and laying the groundwork for a better, more successful start-up. He currently lives in Philadelphia and is also the president of Synergetic Sound and Lighting, Inc. and DJ and A/V company.*





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